

### Kidde's bellwether management job

The General Services Administration (GSA) made construction history of a sort with award of its first construction manager (CM) contract (ENR 9/16 p. 73). The much heralded Beltsville (Md.) building project had attracted 35 serious contenders for the coveted chance to be first with a kind of construction service new to GSA in its efforts to deliver public buildings better, faster and cheaper. Although GSA promises a continuing flow of projects on which it will use construction managers, all eyes for now will be on the winner of this first contract, Walter Kidde Constructors, New York City.

Kidde, a member of the Boise Cascade group of construction and engineering companies, is in association with McKee-Berger-Mansueto, a New York City construction management firm. They should be expected to do an exemplary job in scheduling, direction and control of the design and construction of the project.

With the ink barely dry on the contract, many in the industry already find reason to criticize—on two counts. First, there are those who criticize GSA for its award of this type of contract on the basis of what ultimately appears to be price. Five finalists in the competition were asked to submit their fees, and Kidde submitted the lowest of the five. However, GSA says that its final selection was not based on price alone but on an evaluation of the total service offered plus price, and that the construction manager contract is considered a consulting personal service not a professional service contract. Second, there are those who criticize Kidde for taking the assignment at so low a price as its \$457,000 fee.

Some among those closest to the competition were surprised GSA so quickly selected the low bidder from among the five it had, in effect, prequalified for final consideration. Many who followed the development of the project expected negotiations might follow the fee submissions, with the final selection being any one of the five at any negotiable price within the range of the bids.

Some among the many who proposed or considered proposing themselves for this contract will claim Kidde "bought the job," bid it at or below cost. Indeed, the \$277,000 portion of its fee Kidde has assigned to the CM function during the three-year construction period seems precious little for what will be demanded both by the contract and by Kidde's desire to look good on this bellwether job. But a Kidde spokesman says "we will make money."

Let's not be too harsh on GSA, which got a good CM at an unexpectedly good price, or on Kidde for capturing the prize that so many sought to win. Rather let's hope that in its successful execution this contract

### Action on the congested corridor

After years of study and evaluating all Department of Transportation (DOT) has a strong proposal for near-term circulation in the Northeast Corridor, where the country's population live and work on a lot of its land (see p. 11).

The proposal confirms what many men have long thought obvious—that if road improvements are the most practical, it will take perhaps another year to get them and get financial commitments from all agencies expected to participate before specific legislation.

But the corridor report is more than DOT's fluffy national policy statement of previous week (ENR 9/16 p. 71). Taking environmental and other constraints in areas, it proposes measures to relieve congestion quickly.

The study, research and computer work have gone into the expensive Northeast Transportation Project should still produce thorough plans for future decades. But, as DOT's immediate action program could still set when new technology is available.

All parties concerned must give top priority in refining the plan as necessary and getting it through drawing boards.

### Is the AEC running scared?

The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) is miffed for its decision not to appeal a court decision that in essence accused it of not showing concern for the environment in the licensing of new power plants (ENR 8/5 p. 11).

There's no doubt that the AEC in recent years developed a poor image, mostly because for man Glenn Seaborg lost his patience now and then and lashed out at some opponents of nuclear power. Seaborg was probably justified a good bit, and the AEC's image is unjustifiably tarnished.

But the agency now seems to be running on its second thoughts, the AEC's projects, including five that are operating, under environmental gun, subject to suspension if environmental impact is reviewed (ENR 9/16 p. 11).

Nuclear projects already take longer to get through drawing board to kilowatt production than any other project known to modern man, mainly because of regulatory procedures so lengthy and complex they defy comprehension. The project's effect on the environment is always part of this preconstruction process of red tape.

It's a new tangle of green tape. At the end and how long will the lights stay on.